

17th District Drug Court graduation is Oct. 20 in Hernando

October 13, 2015

Mississippi Court of Appeals Judge Jimmy Maxwell will be the guest speaker Oct. 20 at the graduation ceremony of the 17th Circuit Drug Court. The ceremony is scheduled for 2 p.m. in the main courtroom at the DeSoto County Courthouse, 2535 U.S. Highway 51 in Hernando.

Circuit Judges Robert P. Chamberlin and Jimmy McClure will preside over the graduation ceremony.

About 45 people are expected to graduate, said 17th District Drug Court Coordinator Craig Sheley. It will be the seventh graduation ceremony for the program which began in 2006. The program takes three years to complete.

There are 271 participants enrolled in the program in the court district that includes DeSoto, Panola, Tallahatchie, Tate and Yalobusha counties. Participants in the 17th Circuit Drug Court must plead guilty to the charges and pay for their own drug treatment. They may be sent to a residential treatment program or placed in intensive out-patient treatment for one to three months. After completing treatment, participants meet weekly with the judge and submit to weekly drug screening. They are subject to intensive supervision by a probation officer. Participants spent about 10,000 hours with alcohol and drug counselors during the 2015 fiscal year that ended June 30, according to State Drug Court Coordinator Joey Craft.

Drug Court participants must remain employed and pay fines as well as a \$100 monthly fee to participate. Participants in the 17th Circuit Drug Court paid \$156,353.66 in fines during the 2015 fiscal year, and paid \$293,319.20 in fees.

Drug courts seek to rehabilitate drug-using offenders through drug treatment and intense supervision with drug testing and frequent court appearances. Drug courts offer the incentive of a chance to remain out of jail and be employed, and the sanction of a jail sentence if participants fail to remain drug-free and in compliance with all program requirements.

There are 40 drug courts in operation across the state – 22 adult felony court programs, 13 juvenile programs, three misdemeanor programs and two family courts.

Judge Maxwell, of Oxford, has served on the Court of Appeals for six years. He was appointed, then elected from District 1, Position 1, consisting of 23 counties in north Mississippi. Before joining the Court, Judge Maxwell served as Assistant United States Attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi.

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